

REMARKS

Typographical errors have been corrected in claims 5 and 9. Claims 22 and 27 have been amended as suggested by the examiner.

Claims are rejected under 35 USC 103 as allegedly being obvious over the combination of Chyall US 20030209699 and Ushiki UA 4,889,885, further in view of US 5,770,644 for claims 26 - 28.

It is respectfully submitted that this is not so. The invention as presently claimed is not obvious because the feature in the present claims of an organic component comprising at least one ionic organic component and one or more neutral organic components represents an inventive selection over the prior art cited by the Examiner.

The use of a mixture of ionic and neutral organic components in the present invention affords specific unexpected advantages supported by the disclosure and data of the present application. These advantages are discussed at page 11, line 12 to page 12, line 6 and at page 14, lines 18-32. In particular, it is noted at page 11, lines 12 -20 that use of organic ions promotes dispersion of the species within a plastic matrix leading to improvement of properties such as fire performance.

More importantly, page 11, lines 25-34 provides that carrying out the ion exchange process in the further presence of neutral organic species leads to incorporation of neutral organic species in the intergallery region which facilitates dispersal of the species when incorporated into plastics. It is further noted at page 11, line 34 to page 12, line 6 that the neutral molecules are able to diffuse away and become homogeneously dispersed with the plastic matrix during the melt process which leads to partial exfoliation of the inorganic-organic hybrid which in turn leads to improved performance of the plastic. The improved dispersion of the ionic and neutral organic components is believed to arise from the increase in intergallery layer distance obtained when using a mixture of ionic and neutral organic